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Programme planning

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Tammam **Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic)

I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 15 September 1998, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-third session the item entitled "Programme planning" and to allocate it to the Fifth Committee.

2. The Fifth Committee considered the item at its 6th to 8th and 43rd meetings, on 12, 14 and 15 October and 14 December 1998. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records (A/C.5/53/SR.6-8 and 43).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Proposed revisions to programme 1, Political affairs; 2, Peacekeeping operations; 3, Peaceful uses of outer space; 5, Policy coordination and sustainable development; 6, Africa: New Agenda for Development; 7, Economic and social information and policy analysis; 8, Development support and management services; 13/Rev.1, International drug control; 14, Economic and social development in Africa; 15, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific; 16, Economic development in Europe; 17, Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean; 18, Economic and social development in western Asia; 20, Humanitarian assistance; 23, Public information; 24, Management and central support services; 26, Disarmament; 27, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services, and 28, Economic and social affairs, to the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 (A/53/6 (Progs. 1–3, 5–8, 13/Rev.1, 14–18, 20, 23 and Corr.1, 24 and Corr.1 and 26–28);

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(b) Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its thirty-eighth session;[1]

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997 (A/53/122 and Add.1);

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on the proposed revisions to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (A/53/133);

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on priority-setting within the medium-term plan (A/53/134);

(f) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services entitled "Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives" (A/53/90);

(g) Letter dated 13 November 1998 from the Chairman of the First Committee addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/53/41);

(h) Letter dated 3 December 1998 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/53/42);

(i) Letter dated 11 November 1998 from the Vice-Chairperson of the Third Committee addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/53/43);

(j) Letter dated 5 November 1998 from the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/53/44).

4. At the 6th meeting, on 12 October, the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination introduced the report of that Committee (see A/C.5/53/SR.6).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.18

5. At the 43rd meeting, on 14 December, the representative of Uganda and coordinator of the informal consultations on the item introduced a draft resolution entitled "Programme planning" (A/C.5/53/L.18), submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations.

6. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.18 without a vote (see para. 8).

7. Following the adoption of the draft resolution, statements in explanation of position were made by the representatives of Saudi Arabia, Indonesia (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China), Austria (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union), Poland and the Syrian Arab Republic.

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16).

III. Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

8. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Programme planning

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 37/234 of 21 December 1982, 38/227 A of 20 December 1983, 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 51/219 of 18 December 1996,

Having examined the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001,[2]

Having considered the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its thirty-eighth session,[3]

Having also considered the reports of the Secretary-General on the proposed revisions to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation,[4] priority-setting within the medium-term plan[5] and the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997,[6] as well as the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives,[7]

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its thirty-eighth session;[3]

2. *Takes note* of the appreciable efforts made at the thirty-eighth session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to improve the working methods and procedures of the Committee within the framework of its mandate;

3. *Reaffirms* the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination as the main subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination;

4. *Takes note* of the conclusions and recommendations contained in part one, chapter V, of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its thirty-eighth session and looks forward to their implementation;

I

Medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001

1. *Reaffirms* regulation 4.2 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure full compliance with this regulation;

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[2] A/53/6 (Progs. 1–3, 5–8, 13/Rev.1, 14–18, 20, 23 and Corr.1, 24 and Corr.1 and 26–28).

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16).

[4] A/53/133.

[5] A/53/134.

[6] A/53/122 and Add.1.

[7] A/53/90.

2. *Adopts* the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 submitted by the Secretary-General,[2] as amended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination;[8]

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the consultative process with Member States;

4. *Also emphasizes* the importance of the contribution of the sectoral, regional and central intergovernmental bodies, in particular the Main Committees of the General Assembly, in reviewing and improving the quality of the medium-term plan and its revisions;

5. *Regrets* that revisions to some programmes of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 were not reviewed by the relevant intergovernmental bodies;

6. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to take all appropriate measures, including ad hoc measures, and to submit proposals, through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, so as to enable the Main Committees of the General Assembly, as well as the sectoral, functional and regional bodies, effectively to review the relevant portions of the medium-term plan or its revisions, with a view to facilitating their consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Fifth Committee;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a preliminary report, in accordance with the existing mandates of the General Assembly, on possible arrangements for post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, as well as on the transition from relief to development, maintaining the distinct nature of both activities, for consideration by the relevant Main Committees of the General Assembly and intergovernmental bodies;

II

Priorities

1. *Stresses* the importance of priority-setting as an integral part of the planning, programming and budgeting process;

2. *Decides* that priorities shall continue to be established in the medium-term plan, which is the principal policy directive of the United Nations, and shall guide the allocation of resources in subsequent programme budgets through the mechanisms provided for in General Assembly resolution 41/213;

3. *Also decides* that priorities contained in the budget outline shall be in conformity with the priorities in the medium-term plan;

4. *Emphasizes* that priorities, once established by the General Assembly, cannot be changed or altered unless it so decides;

[8] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16), part one, chap. II.B, and part two, chap. III.A.

III

Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation

1. *Approves* the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the revisions to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;[9]

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to prepare revisions to the relevant rules and to bring them to the attention of the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Coordination before promulgation;

IV

New narratives of the programme budget

Approves the new programme narratives for section 7A, Economic and social affairs[10] and section 26, Public information,[11] subject to the modifications recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination[12] and also to the provisions of the present resolution;

V

Programme performance

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997[6] and the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination thereon, subject to the provisions below;

2. *Notes with concern* the late submission of the programme performance report, and urges the Secretary-General to submit the report in future to all Member States by the end of the first quarter following completion of the biennial budget period, in accordance with regulation 6.3 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;

3. *Recalls* section II, paragraph 13, of its resolution 50/214 of 23 December 1995, in which it decided to keep the vacancy rate at 6.4 per cent during the biennium 1996–1997, and, in this context, expresses its deep concern at the high vacancy rate and its adverse impact in some areas of programme delivery;

4. *Reaffirms* that the vacancy rate is a tool for budgetary calculations and should not be used to achieve budgetary savings;

5. *Deeply regrets* the use of vacant posts for consultancies and short-term appointments during the biennium 1996–1997;

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[9] Ibid., part two, para. 52.

[10] E/AC.51/1998/6 (Sect. 7A) and Corr.1.

[11] E/AC.51/1998/6 (Sect. 26).

[12] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16), part one, paras. 192 and 208.

6. *Notes with appreciation* that the United Nations, in particular the regional commissions, provided development-related advisory and technical support to Member States during the biennium 1996–1997, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to extend such services during the current biennium, in accordance with existing mandates;

7. *Reaffirms* the right of Member States to seek the support and assistance of the United Nations, individually and collectively, in the regional and subregional context, in their efforts to promote developmental activities;

8. *Emphasizes* the need for greater interaction between the regional commissions and respective regional organizations;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the regional commissions provide technical assistance to Member States, including through their respective regional organizations;

10. *Notes* the efforts made to improve the quality of the report and to review performance within the context of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, and stresses that in future performance reports more emphasis should be placed upon qualitative analysis to reflect achievements in implementing programme activities;

11. *Reaffirms* regulation 4.1 of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, and reiterates that resources should be utilized strictly for the purposes approved by the General Assembly;

12. *Notes with concern* that some of the findings contained in the programme performance report for the biennium 1996–1997 are ambiguous and contradictory, and therefore some of the conclusions remain vague and general in nature;

13. *Also notes with concern* that the programme performance report for the biennium 1996–1997, in some instances, commented on actions which did not conform with the resolutions of the General Assembly;

14. *Further notes with concern* that some resources were redeployed to fund activities that had not been approved in the programme budget for the biennium 1996–1997, while a number of mandated programmes and activities, particularly in priority areas, were postponed, curtailed or cancelled;

15. *Requests* the Secretary General, in the light of paragraph 57 of the programme performance report for the biennium 1996–1997,[13] to report with clear evidence on the impact of the reform of the Organization and restructuring of the Secretariat on programme delivery during the biennium 1998–1999 in the context of the report on the programme performance of the United Nations for that biennium;

16. *Notes* the finding in the programme performance report for the biennium 1996–1997 that programme managers, in accordance with the decisions of the General Assembly and the relevant regulations and rules, have managed to minimize the adverse effect of financial constraints and achieved high rates of implementation in some areas;

17. *Recognizes* the need for effective systems at the intergovernmental and departmental levels to ensure that activities correspond to the mandates reflected in the medium-term plan and programme budgets, as well as the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of performance;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit proposals for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-ninth session on ways in which

[13] A/53/122.

the full implementation and the quality of mandated programmes and activities could be ensured and could be better assessed by and reported to Member States;

19. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to provide information on the reasons for the further postponement of the delivery of outputs to the biennium 1998–1999 and the opinion of relevant intergovernmental bodies on the proposal by the Secretary-General to delete fifty-seven outputs carried over from the biennium 1994–1995, for consideration at its current session;

20. *Notes* that the proposals requested in paragraph 50 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997 have not been submitted, and, in this context, reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to enhance the role and participation of all relevant departments, in particular the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, in the preparation of future programme performance reports;

VI

Evaluation

1. *Stresses* the importance and necessity of further improving evaluation and integrating it into the cycle of programme planning, budgeting and monitoring with a view to improving and strengthening programme formulation and implementation;

2. *Also stresses* that the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation provide a sound basis for effective monitoring and evaluation if implemented in all parts of the Organization;

3. *Approves* the addition of the programmes on policy coordination and sustainable development and on population to the schedule of in-depth evaluations to be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-first session;

4. *Endorses* the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination[14] on the in-depth evaluations of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme and on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its thirty-fifth session on the evaluation of peacekeeping operations: start-up phase;[15]

5. *Decides* to forward to the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its thirty-fifth session on the evaluation of the programme on environment;[16]

6. *Emphasizes* that guidelines on programme monitoring and evaluation should be in conformity with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;

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[14] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16), part one, paras. 225–230, 239–241 and 250–253.

[15] E/AC.51/1998/2 and Corr.1, E/AC.51/1998/3 and E/AC.51/1998/4 and Corr.1.

[16] E/AC.51/1998/5 and Corr.1.

VII

Other conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Endorses the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination[17] regarding the annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1997,[18] the progress report on the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996–2001,[19] and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.[20]

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[17] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16), part one, paras. 285–288, 301–310 and 323–333.

[18] E/1998/21.

[19] E/CN.6/1998/3.

[20] E/AC.51/1998/7.

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Pattern of conferences

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Tammam **Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic)

I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 15 September 1998, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "Pattern of conferences" and to allocate it to the Fifth Committee.

2. The Fifth Committee considered the item at its 10th to 12th, 30th, 33rd and 43rd meetings, on 19, 21 and 23 October, 19 and 23 November and 14 December 1998. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records (A/C.5/53/SR.10-12, 30, 33 and 43).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Conferences;[1]

(b) Report of the Committee on Programme and Coordination on the work of its thirty-eighth session;[2]

(c) Report of the Committee on Information;[3]

(d) First report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999;[4]

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 32* and corrigendum (A/53/32 and Corr.1).
[2] Ibid., *Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16).
[3] Ibid., *Supplement No. 21* (A/53/21).
[4] Ibid., *Fifty-second session, Supplement No. 7* (A/52/7).

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(e) Report of the Secretary-General on access to the optical disk system (A/52/803);

(f) Report of the Secretary-General on measures taken to develop further the cost-accounting system regarding the costs of meetings and documentation (A/52/1000);

(g) Report of the Secretary-General on interpretation and translation issues referred to in section III, paragraphs 13 to 15, of General Assembly resolution 52/220 (A/53/221);

(h) Report of the Secretary-General on a cost-accounting system for conference services (A/53/257);

(i) Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on guidelines for internal control standards (A/53/508);

(j) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "United Nations publications: enhancing cost-effectiveness in implementing legislative mandates" (A/51/946);

(k) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "United Nations publications: enhancing cost-effectiveness in implementing legislative mandates" (A/52/685);

(l) Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on United Nations publications (A/53/669).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.24

4. At the 43rd meeting, on 14 December 1998, the representative of Tunisia and coordinator of informal consultations on the item introduced a draft resolution entitled "Pattern of conferences" (A/C.5/53/L.24), submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations.

5. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.24 without a vote (see para. 7).

6. Following the adoption of the resolution, statements in explanation of position were made by the representatives of Austria (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union), Poland, Indonesia (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China) and Cuba.

III. Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

7. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Pattern of conferences

The General Assembly,

A

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 40/243 of 18 December 1985, 43/222 B of 21 December 1988, 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, 48/222 A of 23 December

1993, 49/221 A of 23 December 1994, 50/206 A of 23 December 1995, 51/211 A of 18 December 1996, 52/214 A of 22 December 1997, and its decision 52/468 of 31 March 1998,

Reaffirming the mandate of the Committee on Conferences,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences,[5]

1. *Takes note with concern* of the observations of the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 135 of its report and encourages members to participate in the work of the Committee;

2. *Invites* the Committee on Conferences to consider the question of participation of observers in the work of the Committee in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure;

3. *Notes with appreciation* the work of the Committee on Conferences, and takes note of its report;

4. *Approves* the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 1999 as submitted by the Committee on Conferences,[6] subject to the provisions of the present resolution;

5. *Authorizes* the Committee on Conferences to make adjustments to the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1999 that might become necessary as a result of actions and decisions taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide all the conference services required as a result of decisions taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, taking into account, as necessary, the procedures established by the Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 42/211 of 21 December 1987;

7. *Reaffirms* its decision that the headquarters rule shall be adhered to by all bodies;

8. *Decides* that waivers to the headquarters rule shall be granted solely on the basis of the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations that the Committee on Conferences has recommended for adoption by the General Assembly;

9. *Invites* all its subsidiary bodies that are authorized to meet away from their established headquarters to keep under review the exception to the headquarters rule in the light of their current work situation and to report any changes to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences;

10. *Notes with appreciation* that the Secretariat took into account the arrangements referred to in paragraphs 5 and 6 of General Assembly resolution 52/214 A and that the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha, which occur in 1999 on 18 January and 29 March, respectively, shall be observed as official holidays of the United Nations, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure strict implementation of those arrangements when preparing all future draft calendars of conferences and meetings of the United Nations;

11. *Decides* that United Nations bodies should be invited to avoid holding meetings on 9 April 1999 and that these arrangements should be taken into account when drafting future calendars of conferences and meetings;

12. *Requests* the Committee on Conferences to consider, at its next session, the proposal to avoid holding meetings by United Nations bodies on lunar New Year's Day;

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[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 32* and corrigendum (A/53/32 and Corr.1).

[6] Ibid., annex.

13. *Emphasizes* that, when planning the calendar of conferences and meetings, every effort should be made to avoid simultaneous peak periods at the various duty stations, and requests the Secretariat, when drafting future calendars of conferences and meetings, to merge into one section the draft list of meetings of treaty bodies established under the auspices of the United Nations, and the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the principal organs of the specialized agencies;

14. *Also emphasizes* the importance of providing adequate conference-servicing resources to all United Nations conference centres;

15. *Notes with appreciation* that the overall utilization factor for 1997 exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent, in particular at Geneva and Vienna;

16. *Notes* the efforts by the Secretary-General to improve the utilization rates of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi for 1996 and 1997;

17. *Expresses concern* that the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi are still underutilized, as recorded during the period 1996–1997;

18. *Reiterates* its call for better utilization of the conference facilities at Nairobi;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in view of the fact that the United Nations Office at Nairobi has been upgraded to a full-fledged United Nations centre, to explore the possibility of establishing a permanent interpretation service at the centre and to submit a comprehensive report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session;

20. *Also requests* the Secretary-General, without prejudice to the practices currently used to meet interpretation requirements, to examine the provision of interpretation services to other locations from permanent interpretation structures based in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, taking into account the request contained in paragraph 19 above for the establishment of a permanent interpretation service at Nairobi;

21. *Invites* all subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commission on Human Settlements, and encourages Member States, intergovernmental bodies and regional and other major groupings to consider increasing their use of the conference facilities at Nairobi;

22. *Reiterates* its request to the Secretary-General to assist the aforementioned bodies in improving this situation and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences, on the actions taken to this end;

23. *Also reiterates* its request to the Committee on Conferences to continue to consult with those bodies that consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources;

24. *Requests* that the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences transmit a letter to the chairpersons of all bodies that utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated conference resources in the previous year, informing them of the problem and drawing their attention to significant loss of meeting time, with a view to encouraging appropriate action on their part so as to improve the utilization of conference resources;

25. *Notes* the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of sessional bodies, in view of the increased

requests for meetings of regional and other major groups, and welcomes the fact that 81 per cent of the requests for such meetings were met;

26. *Notes with concern* the difficulties experienced by some Member States owing to the lack of conference services for some meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

27. *Regrets* that 19 per cent of the requests for interpretation services made by regional and other major groupings of Member States were not met, while recognizing that meetings of Charter and mandated bodies must be serviced as a priority;

28. *Decides* to include all necessary resources in the budget for the next biennium to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, and requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences, a report on the implementation of this decision;

29. *Urges* intergovernmental bodies to spare no effort at the planning stage to take into account meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, to make provision for such meetings in their programmes of work and to notify conference services well in advance of any cancellations so that unutilized conference-servicing resources may, to the extent possible, be reassigned to meetings of regional and other major groupings of States;

30. *Deeply regrets* that the reports requested in paragraphs 9 and 15 of its resolution 52/214 A were not submitted to the General Assembly and notes, in this context, that those reports were presented only in an oral form to the Committee on Conferences;

31. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit the reports requested in paragraphs 9 and 15 of its resolution 52/214 A before 31 March 1999, and decides, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 8 (a) of its resolution 50/206 C of 23 December 1995, that an oral report cannot substitute for a report requested by the General Assembly;

32. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the use of remote interpretation and translation will not affect the quality of interpretation and translation and will not in itself lead to a reduction of language posts;

33. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on possible measures that would alleviate the excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and ensure the required quality of conference services Secretariat-wide;

34. *Requests* the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts aimed at filling vacancies in language services at all duty stations;

35. *Also requests* the Secretary-General, when filling posts of translators and interpreters, irrespective of the proposed contractual status of candidates, to take duly into account their professional qualifications, including pre-job training and experience in order to maintain at all times the highest possible quality in the interpretation and translation services, and to ensure equal treatment of language units of the Secretariat;

36. *Stresses* that the quality of interpretation in the six official languages should be improved in accordance with its resolution 52/214, and decides that the standards that govern the staffing of the interpretation booths shall continue to be observed;

37. *Welcomes* the new organizational structure of conference services, which would allow for more effective coordination among the four United Nations conference-servicing centres in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, and requests the Secretary-General to review the administrative instruction of 8 May 1987 on guidelines for the preparation of host Government agreements falling under General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985[7] so as to reflect the new organizational structure;

B

Recalling its resolutions 47/202 B of 22 December 1992, 28/222 B of 23 December 1993, 49/221 B of 23 December 1994, 50/206 B and C of 23 December 1995, 51/211 B and F of 18 December 1996 and 15 September 1997, and 52/214 B of 22 December 1997,

Having considered the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[8] and the report of the Secretary-General on translation issues,[9]

1. *Expresses deep concern* about deficiencies in the quality of some reports and documents originating in the Secretariat, and requests the Secretariat to take all necessary measures to address the situation and to develop measurements to evaluate improvements made in the quality of reports and documents;

2. *Notes with deep concern* the low rate of compliance with the six-week rule for the issuance of documentation;

3. *Reiterates* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that documentation is available in accordance with the six-week rule for the distribution of documents simultaneously in the six official languages of the General Assembly;

4. *Requests* the Secretariat to carry out a study on the possible relationship between the late issuance of documentation and the low utilization of conference services by some bodies;

5. *Regrets* that there continue to be delays in the submission of documents to conference services, expresses concern that most of the delay in issuance of a document is due to late submission of documents from the substantive departments, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that substantive departments prepare their programme of work to meet the deadline for issuance of documents;

6. *Reaffirms* its decision that, if a report is issued late, the reasons for the delay should be indicated when the report is introduced;

7. *Regrets* that its decision taken in paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 50/206 C has not been implemented;

8. *Decides* that if a report is submitted late to conference services, the reasons for this should be included in a footnote to the document;

9. *Endorses* the request of the Committee on Conferences to the Secretariat that a report containing detailed data on the reasons for delays in the issuance of documentation and an analysis of the additional costs incurred by document-processing services and of other financial implications of the late submission and issuance of documents be presented to the Committee at its 1999 substantive session;

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[7] ST/AI/342.

[8] A/53/507.

[9] A/53/221.

10. *Notes with concern* that the provisions of paragraphs 24 and 25 of General Assembly resolution 52/214 B are not always being implemented despite reiteration of these provisions in Assembly decision 52/471 of 31 March 1998;

11. *Reiterates* its request that the Secretary-General direct all departments to include, where appropriate, the following elements in reports originating in the Secretariat:

(a) A summary of the report;

(b) Consolidated conclusions, recommendations and other proposed actions;

(c) Relevant background information;

12. *Also reiterates* that all documents submitted to legislative organs by the Secretariat and expert bodies for consideration and action should have conclusions and recommendations in bold print;

13. *Stresses once again* that the press releases should reflect accurately the statements of Member States as delivered in their original languages;

14. *Notes with concern* that the provisions of paragraphs 1.21 and 1.22 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001[10] are not being implemented, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services of the Secretariat conducts consultations and coordinates the assignment of responsibilities for the implementation of all General Assembly resolutions and decisions and follows up to ensure timely action by relevant departments and bodies;

15. *Stresses once again* the need for compliance with the existing page limits, and invites all intergovernmental bodies to consider, where appropriate, the possibility of further reducing the length of their reports from thirty-two to twenty pages without adversely affecting either the quality of presentation or the content of the reports;

16. *Calls upon* the Secretariat to make its procedures for obtaining waivers to the sixteen-page rule more rigorous, while maintaining, however, the necessary degree of flexibility, with a view to encouraging author departments to reduce the length of their submissions while maintaining high standards of quality;

17. *Requests* the Secretariat to submit to the Committee on Conferences, every two years, updated information on the number and length of documents;

18. *Also requests* the Secretariat to continue consultations with the secretariats of intergovernmental bodies with a view to informing them on the speedy issuance of unedited verbatim transcripts and the cost savings derived therefrom, and encouraging them to follow the example of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in carrying out the experiment with unedited verbatim transcripts, so as to enable the Committee on Conferences to make final recommendations on the matter;

19. *Emphasizes* that the choice of unedited verbatim transcripts should be consistent with the needs of the bodies concerned;

20. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to improve the quality of translation of documents into the six official languages in a timely manner;

21. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that summary and verbatim records are issued in all six official languages concurrently;

[10] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 6* and corrigendum (A/51/6/Rev.1 and Corr.1).

22. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts, where appropriate, to introduce new technologies such as machine-assisted translation and common terminology databases while ensuring that there are no adverse effects on the quality of documentation and translation;

23. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts made by the Secretariat to address the concerns expressed by delegations on translation-related matters, and encourages the Secretariat to continue its efforts to improve quality and proficiency in all six translation services;

24. *Takes note with appreciation* of the decision by the Secretariat to reduce the utilization of self-revision to the recommended level so as to ensure the desired quality of parliamentary texts, and emphasizes that the measures taken in relation to revision of job descriptions, training of staff, peer review and spot checks and other related initiatives should be continued;

25. *Expresses concern* over continued high rates of self-revision during peak workload periods and occasional inadequate translations, which have sometimes hampered the work of delegations, and emphasizes the importance of continuous training for all translators at all duty stations and of developing measures to provide the translators with increased support from submitting offices and secretariats;

26. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the post of reviser is provided in the six official languages in accordance with paragraph 19 of its resolution 52/214 B and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session;

27. *Stresses* that the United Nations should maintain a permanent interpretation and translation system capable of responding to its average workloads;

28. *Encourages* the Secretariat to continue its efforts to ensure effective linguistic quality control through to the final stage of document production and distribution and to report to the Committee on Conferences on the steps taken in that regard;

29. *Regrets* the difficulties being faced by the language service staff in relation to their career development;

30. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session analysing such problems as may exist related to career development in language services and taking into account that the numbers and grade levels of staff should be commensurate with the needs of the Organization as well as the fact that requirements differ between languages as well as between duty stations;

31. *Recommends* that due account should be taken of the return in terms of, *inter alia*, possible savings and efficiency gains in planning new technology;

32. *Also recommends* that computer-assisted translation systems should be compatible with the existing computer platforms used in the United Nations, that they should be upgradable to future technological developments such as speech recognition and remote access, and that the experience of all duty stations should be taken into account in their development;

33. *Takes note* of paragraph 62 of the report of the Committee on Conferences;[5]

34. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session on the impact of economy measures on the delivery of mandated conference services;

35. *Also requests* the Secretary-General, when preparing budget proposals for conference services, to ensure that all necessary resources are proposed for such services,

giving priority to redressing the inadequacies in the provision of conference services in the most efficient manner for continuous improvements in the quality and delivery of those services;

36. *Decides* to defer to its resumed session consideration of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit,[11] the comments of the Secretary-General thereon,[12] the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination[13] and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on United Nations publications;[14]

C

Recalling its resolutions 50/206 D of 23 December 1995, 51/211 C of 18 December 1996, 51/211 F of 15 December 1997 and 52/214 C of 22 December 1997,

Having considered the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[4] and the report of the Secretary-General on access to the optical disk system,[15]

Stressing the importance of equal access to, and benefit from, the optical disk system and other new technologies in all six official languages for all Member States and the need to overcome the difficulties faced by some Member States, in particular developing countries, in acquiring the technology to access the optical disk system, as well as other available technologies,

Appreciating the actions taken by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council to achieve universal connectivity between United Nations databases and those of Member States, including through their permanent missions, and the training programmes initiated to that end,

Appreciating also the efforts of the Secretary-General to incorporate new information technologies in the work of the Organization,

1. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Secretariat to improve access to the optical disk system, particularly the establishment of additional optical disk system centres;

2. *Recognizes* the efforts to provide wider access to the optical disk system, while continuing to ensure the availability of hard copies of documents for Member States, in particular developing countries;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that all resolutions and decisions, and their annexes, if any, adopted by the principal organs of the United Nations should be posted on the optical disk system expeditiously;

4. *Notes with appreciation* that the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat has launched the United Nations Web sites in Russian, Arabic and Chinese this year;

5. *Stresses* the need for the continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations Web sites, with a view to achieving equal treatment of the six official languages on those Web sites;

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[11] See A/51/946.

[12] See A/52/685.

[13] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/53/16), part one.

[14] A/53/669.

[15] A/52/803.

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit proposals in this connection to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences and the Committee on Information;

7. *Reiterates* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the texts of all new public documents, in all six official languages, and information materials of the United Nations are made available through the United Nations Web site daily and are accessible to Member States without delay;

8. *Notes* that, in addition to the free-of-charge connection, via the Internet, of all permanent and observer missions, requests have been received by the Organization for access to the optical disk system from a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;

9. *Reaffirms* that, as provided for in its resolution 51/211 F, access to the optical disk system will continue to be provided free-of-charge to permanent and observer missions and other government offices of Member States, with a maximum of ten access passwords for each Member State, and that the optical disk system will continue to be made available to all staff of the Secretariat;

10. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in paragraph 13 of its report[4] that a way be found, while maintaining the quality of service and priority given by the General Assembly to the users mentioned in paragraph 1 of Assembly resolution 51/211 F, to apply income generated through optical disk system subscriptions directly to help meet the cost of optical disk system maintenance and/or expansion, and to establish a mechanism to monitor satisfaction with the optical disk system;

D

Taking note of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[4] and the report of the Secretary-General on the cost-accounting system for conference services,[16]

Stressing the need to provide Member States and United Nations bodies with more comprehensive and accurate information on the costs of meetings and documentation,

1. *Stresses* the need for the Secretariat to take into consideration the experience of all duty stations when improvements were made in existing information systems;

2. *Endorses* the view expressed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in paragraph 10 of its report[4] that the report of the Secretary-General does not provide sufficient information at this stage to allow the General Assembly to recommend the endorsement of a full-fledged development of a cost-accounting system;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at the earliest opportunity, taking into account the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained in paragraph 10 of its report;

[16] A/52/1000.

E

Recalling its decision 38/401 of 23 September 1983 and its resolution 52/214 E of 22 December 1997 concerning the prohibition of smoking in small conference rooms and the discouragement of smoking in large conference rooms,

1. *Calls upon* representatives of Member States to abide by its decision 38/401 and its resolution 52/214 E;

2. *Encourages* all users of United Nations conference facilities, in order to avoid involuntary exposure to passive smoking, to refrain from smoking, in particular in conference rooms.

United Nations A/53/745

General Assembly

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Fifty-third session
Agenda item 123

Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Tammam **Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic)

I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 15 September 1998, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-third session the item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola" and to allocate it to the Fifth Committee.

2. The Fifth Committee considered the item at its 42nd and 43rd meetings, on 10 and 14 December 1998. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records (A/C.5/53/SR.42 and 43).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (A/52/799/Add.1) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/53/722).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.19

4. At the 43rd meeting, on 14 December, the Chairman of the Committee introduced a draft resolution entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola" (A/C.5/53/L.19), submitted on the basis of informal consultations.

5. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted the draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.19 without a vote (see para. 6).

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III. Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

6. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola[1] and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[2]

Bearing in mind Security Council resolutions 626 (1988) of 20 December 1988, by which the Council established the United Nations Angola Verification Mission, 696 (1991) of 30 May 1991, by which the Council decided to entrust a new mandate to the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (thenceforth called the United Nations Angola Verification Mission II), 976 (1995) of 8 February 1995, by which the Council authorized the establishment of a peacekeeping operation (thenceforth called the United Nations Angola Verification Mission III), 1118 (1997) of 30 June 1997, by which the Council decided to establish, as from 1 July 1997, the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola, and its subsequent resolutions, the latest of which was resolution 1213 (1998) of 3 December 1998,

Recalling its resolution 43/231 of 16 February 1989 on the financing of the Verification Mission and its subsequent resolutions and decisions thereon, the latest of which was resolution 52/8 C of 26 June 1998,

Reaffirming that the costs of the Observer Mission are expenses of the Organization to be borne by Member States in accordance with Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling its previous decisions regarding the fact that, in order to meet the expenditures caused by the Mission, a different procedure is required from that applied to meet expenditures of the regular budget of the United Nations,

Taking into account the fact that the economically more developed countries are in a position to make relatively larger contributions and that the economically less developed countries have a relatively limited capacity to contribute towards such an operation,

Bearing in mind the special responsibilities of the States permanent members of the Security Council, as indicated in General Assembly resolution 1874 (S–IV) of 27 June 1963, in the financing of such operations,

Noting with appreciation that voluntary contributions have been made to the Observer Mission,

Mindful of the fact that it is essential to provide the Observer Mission with the necessary financial resources to enable it to fulfil its responsibilities under the relevant resolutions of the Security Council,

1. *Takes note* of the status of contributions to the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola as at 30 November 1998, including the contributions outstanding in the amount of 105.4 million United States dollars, representing 9 per cent of the total assessed contributions from the inception of the Verification Mission to the period ending 30 June

[1] A/52/799/Add.1.

[2] A/53/722.

1997 and from the inception of the Observer Mission to the period ending 31 October 1998, notes that some 18 per cent of the Member States have paid their assessed contributions in full, and urges all other Member States concerned, in particular those in arrears, to ensure the payment of their outstanding assessed contributions;

2. *Expresses concern* about the financial situation with regard to peacekeeping activities, in particular as regards the reimbursement of troop contributors, which bear additional burdens owing to overdue payments by Member States of their assessments;

3. *Expresses its appreciation* to those Member States which have paid their assessed contributions in full;

4. *Urges* all other Member States to make every possible effort to ensure the payment of their assessed contributions to the Observer Mission in full and on time;

5. *Endorses* the observations and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;[2]

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take all necessary action to ensure that the Observer Mission is administered with maximum efficiency and economy;

7. *Also requests* the Secretary-General, in order to reduce the cost of employing General Service staff, to continue efforts to recruit local staff for the Observer Mission against General Service posts, commensurate with the requirements of the Mission;

8. *Reiterates* the request set out in paragraph 9 of its resolution 52/8 C;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that all managers exercising financial responsibility are issued the revised and updated version of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations;

10. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that every official of the United Nations is responsible to the Secretary-General for the regularity of the actions taken by him or her in the course of his or her official duties and that any official who takes any action contrary to the Financial Rules, or to the administrative instructions issued in connection therewith, may be held personally responsible and financially liable for the consequences of such action;

11. *Recalls* its request to the Secretary-General in its resolution 49/218 of 23 December 1994 to include full implementation of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations as a specific performance indicator in the performance appraisal of all managers;

12. *Decides* to appropriate to the Special Account for the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola the additional amount of 87,200,000 dollars gross (84,575,000 dollars net) for the operation of the Mission for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999, taking into account the amount of 45,899,080 dollars gross (44,301,680 dollars net) already appropriated for the period from 1 July to 31 October 1998 under the provisions of its resolution 52/8 C, and inclusive of the amount of 10,900,000 dollars gross (10,500,650 dollars net) authorized by the Advisory Committee for the month of November 1998 under the terms of section IV of Assembly resolution 49/233 A of 23 December 1994;

13. *Decides also*, as an ad hoc arrangement, and taking into account the amount of 45,899,080 dollars gross (44,301,680 dollars net) already apportioned under the provisions of its resolution 52/8 C, to apportion among Member States the additional amount of 42,821,400 dollars gross (41,532,400 dollars net) for the period from 1 November 1998 to 26 February 1999, in accordance with the composition of groups set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of its resolution 43/232 of 1 March 1989, as adjusted by the Assembly in its

resolutions 44/192 B of 21 December 1989, 45/269 of 27 August 1991, 46/198 A of 20 December 1991, 47/218 A of 23 December 1992, 49/249 A of 20 July 1995, 49/249 B of 14 September 1995, 50/224 of 11 April 1996, 51/218 A to C of 18 December 1996 and 52/230 of 31 March 1998 and its decisions 48/472 A of 23 December 1993 and 50/451 B of 23 December 1995, and taking into account the scale of assessments for the years 1998 and 1999, as set out in its resolution 52/215 A of 22 December 1997;

14. *Decides further* that, in accordance with the provisions of its resolution 973 (X) of 15 December 1955, there shall be set off against the apportionment among Member States, as provided for in paragraph 13 above, their respective share in the Tax Equalization Fund of the estimated staff assessment income of 1,289,000 dollars approved for the period from 1 November 1998 to 26 February 1999;

15. *Decides*, as an ad hoc arrangement, to apportion among Member States the amount of 44,378,600 dollars gross (43,042,600 dollars net) for the period from 27 February to 30 June 1999 at a monthly rate of 10,900,000 dollars gross (10,571,875 dollars net), in accordance with the scheme set out in the present resolution and taking into account the scale of assessments for the year 1999 as set out in its resolution 52/215 A, subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Observer Mission beyond 26 February 1999;

16. *Decides also* that, in accordance with the provisions of its resolution 973 (X) of 15 December 1955, there shall be set off against the apportionment among Member States, as provided for in paragraph 15 above, their respective share in the Tax Equalization Fund of the estimated staff assessment income of 1,336,000 dollars approved for the period from 27 February to 30 June 1999;

17. *Invites* voluntary contributions to the Observer Mission in cash and in the form of services and supplies acceptable to the Secretary-General, to be administered, as appropriate, in accordance with the procedure and practices established by the General Assembly;

18. *Decides* to keep under review during its fifty-third session the item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola".

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 41
THE SITUATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 14 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Contact Group for Bosnia and Herzegovina, I have the honour to bring to your kind attention the following, which relates to the issue of Brčko arbitration:

According to annex 2 of the Dayton Peace Accords, the Arbitral Tribunal for the Dispute over the Inter-Entity Boundary in the Brčko Area was established in order to reach a decision on the administration of Brčko.

Under the Peace Accords, the Tribunal has the duty to allocate political responsibilities in the Brčko area in such a way as to give the fullest possible effect to Dayton's commands for country-wide freedom of movement, the return of displaced persons and refugees, the re-establishment of a multi-ethnic society and the democratization of the political process, all in the interests of regional and international peace.

The Arbitral Tribunal was expected to make a final decision on 15 March 1998, but it decided to delay the decision, hoping that the delay would provide it with a firmer foundation for selecting the most equitable result. It seemed possible, given the developments, that at the end of 1998 there would be change in the Republika Srpska Government, after the elections. The Tribunal concluded that the delay provided time for the progressive forces in the Republika Srpska to gather strength and begin to cooperate with the Federation and the Supervisor's compliance programme. Conversely, if the opposite occurred, the Federation's claim to exclusive control of Brčko would be that much stronger.

According to the Supplemental Award of the Arbitral Tribunal of 15 March 1998 (S/1998/248, annex), the authorities of the Republika Srpska have effectively resisted all of the supervisory programmes aimed at achieving

compliance with the Dayton Accords in the Brčko area, systematically thwarted freedom of movement, systematically intimidating any Bosniacs or Croats who explored the possibility of returning to their former homes in the area, and those few Bosniac and Croat families who still lived in the area were pressured to leave.

Before the war, according to the population census from 1991, the Municipality of Brčko consisted of 44 per cent Bosniacs, 25 per cent Bosnian Croats, and 21 per cent Bosnian Serbs, while 10 per cent were of the other ethnic groups or mixed. The city of Brčko consisted of 56 per cent Bosnian Muslims, 7 per cent Bosnian Croats, 20 per cent Bosnian Serbs and 17 per cent other ethnic groups. During the war, the Bosnian Muslims and Croats were ethnically cleansed from the area. Many were sytematically executed and tortured.

Today, in the city of Brčko, 97.5 per cent of the population consists of ethnic Serbs. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the total number of refugees who have returned to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is 283,724, whereas the total number of refugees who have returned to the Republika Srpska is 19,765. Of this group, 18,271 persons are ethnic Serbs.

Brčko is also the crossroads of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the meeting point of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. The 5-kilometre-wide corridor links the western and eastern parts of the Republika Srpska; at the same time, it is the path from the south to the north of the Federation, as well as its access to the European river transit routes.

Keeping in mind the history, demographics and significance of Brčko, it would be unjust and would be counter to the development of peace, if Brčko were awarded to the Republika Srpska. We would very much appreciate your prompt action on this issue, in the light of the fact that the final decision should be reached early in 1999, and also considering the critical nature of the issue.

May I ask you for your kind assistance in circulating the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 41, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hadi NEJAD HOSSEINIAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative